

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1082

INFO AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: PREPARATIONS FOR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS
UNDER WAY

SUMMARY: GOP HAS BEGUN TECHNICAL PREPARATIONS FOR MARCH
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT REPS
TERM "SPECULATIVE" REPORTS THAT AFM HAS ALREADY DECIDED TO
PARTICIPATE IN WORK OF THAT ASSEMBLY. AS FINAL VOTER REGIS-
TRATION PREPARATIONS BEGIN, INDICATINGS ARE THAT LEFT MAY
TRY TO SQUEEZE CONSERVATIVE CDS PARTY OUT OF REGISTRATION
PROCESS. REAFFIRMATION IN FINAL VERSION OF ELECTORAL LAW OF MARCH
31, 1975 DEADLINE FOR ELECTION REINFORCES BELIEF THAT POLITICAL
DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE HAS BEEN MADE.
END SUMMARY.

1. IN LAST FEW WEEKS VARIOUS PREPARATIONS NECESSARY FOR MARCH
CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS TO BE CARRIED OUT ON SCHEDULE
HAVE BEGUN. SOME 9 MILLION VOTER REGISTRATION FORMS HAVE BEEN
SENT TO THE 4029 LOCAL VOTING PRECINCTS, AND BIDS HAVE BEEN
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LET FOR CONSTRUCTION OF 14,000 BALLOT BOXES.

2. IN ADDITION, THE 5-MAN VOTER REGISTRATION COMMISSIONS WHICH WILL SUPERVISE VOTER REGISTRATION AT PRECINCT LEVEL ARE BEING FORMED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY. EXPECTATIONS ARE THAT ALL THESE COMMISSIONS WILL HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. HOWEVER, REGISTRATION ITSELF CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL FINAL DECREE LAW ON ELECTION PUBLISHED IN DIARIO DO GOVERNO, WHICH SHOULD OCCUR IN NEXT FEW DAYS. REGISTRATION PROCESS, SPECULATES PRESS, SHOULD GET UNDER WAY BY FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER, AT LATEST, AND WILL LAST 30 DAYS.

3. THE COUNCIL OF STATE WILL MEET NOVEMBER 26 TO CONSIDER LAW ON THOSE INELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR HAVING PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY ON BEHALF OF OLD REGIME. (COMMENT: WE UNDERSTAND FROM UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION THAT AT MAXIMUM 1,000-2,000 PERSONS WILL BE INELIGIBLE TO VOTE: ALL MINISTERS IN OLD REGIME, CERTAIN ANP AND PORTUGUESE LEGION LEADERS AND ALL EX-DGS OFFICIALS. IT UNCLEAR IF UNAMBASSADOR BEIGA SAMAO (FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER) AFFECTED BY THIS LAW, OR WHETHER SPECIAL EXCEPTION FOR HIM WILL BE WORKED INTO LAW).

4. MEANWHILE, A LEAD ARTICLE IN DIAIRO DE LISBOA OF A FEW DAYS AGO SPECULATING THAT AFM HAD DECIDED TO PLAY ACTIVE ROLE IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN TERMED "SPECULATIVE" BY VICTOR ALVES. (SEE LISBON 4830). BRIG. OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO COMMENTED "THIS HYPOTHESIS NOT YET DISCUSSED AND SUBJECT REQUIRES A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION." GENERAL FABIAO, WHO CONTACTED BY PRESS, IN TURN SAID HE UNAWARE ANY MEETINGS HAVE TAKEN PLACE TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE AFM PARTICIPATION IN ASSEMBLY WORK.

5. FINALLY, DISCUSSION OF NEW LEGISLATION TO GIVE SEATS IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY TO PORTUGUESE WHO RESIDE IN ANGOLA UNDER CONSIDERATION BY COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. PRESS SPECULATES THAT PERHAPS 2 OR 3 DEPUTIES WOULD BE ALLOTTED THESE RESIDENTS, WHO, UNDER DRAFT ELECTORAL LAW, WOULD BE PRACTICALLY DISENFRANCHISED.

6. MEMBERS OF THE 5-MAN VOTER REGISTRATION COMMISSIONS ARE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE CHOSEN BY PRESIDENT OF THE RESPECTIVE MUNICIPALITY TO WHICH THE PARTICULAR PRECINCT BELONGS, BASED ON SUGGESTIONS MADE BY THE PRECINCT MEMBERS. MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ARE SUPPOSED TO BE "REPRESENTATIVE OF GOUPS AND POLITICAL CURRENTS, AS WELL AS INDEPDEPENDENTS WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE PROGRAM OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT." THESE COMMISSIONS ARE CHARGED BY LAW WITH ENSURING FAIRNESS OF THE ELCTORAL REGISTRATION PROCESS, WHICH WAS OFTEN FRAUDULENT IN PAST. IN LISBON AREA IT APPEARS

THAT PRESSURE IS BEING BROUGHT TO BEAR BY LEFTISTS TO EXCLUDE CONSERVATIVE CDS PARTY REPS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THESE COMMISSIONS. AT NOV. 9 MEETING BY REPS OF THE 53 LISBON PRECINCTS, RECOMMENDATION WAS MADE THAT IN DRAWING UP NOMINATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY MUNICIPALITY, THE PRECINCTS INCLUDE ONE REP EACH FROM PPD, PCP, AND PS, AS WELL AS ONE MEMBER OF MDP AND ONE OTHER PERSON TO BE NAMED BY PRECINCT. THESE RECOMMENDATIONS, WHILE NOT BINDING ON LISBON MUNICIPALITY, MAY IF FOLLOWED SET PRECEDENT WHICH WILL BE USED TO SQUEEZE CDS OUT OF REGISTRATION PROCESS ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY. THIS EXCLUSION WILL IN TURN BE ADDED "EVIDENCE" THAT CDS DOES NOT "IDENTIFY" WITH AFM PROGRAM AND THAT IT NOT "REPRESENTATIVE" PARTY.

7. COMMENT: GOP HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED TO GO AHEAD WITH ELECTION SCHEDULE AS OUTLINED IN PROGRAM OF AFM. HOLDING OF ELECTIONS BY MARCH 31, 1975 AN ESSENTIAL POINT OF THIS PROGRAM. VARIOUS TECHNICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS NEED TO REGISTER OVER 5 MILLION VOTERS IN ONE MONTH WILL MAKE COMPLIANCE WITH THIS TIMETABLE DIFFICULT, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT POLITICAL WILL ON PART OF GOP SUFFICIENT TO OVERCOME THESE DIFFICULTIES. REITERATION OF MARCH 31 DEADLINE FOR HOLDING OF ELECTIONS IN FINAL ELECTORAL LAW TO BE PUBLISHED LATER THIS WEEK REINFORCES THIS BELIEF.
SCOTT

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